
News Release

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Study shows need for additional veterans care facilities in Virginia

(RICHMOND, Va.) – According to a study conducted by the Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy at the College of William & Mary, Virginia will need up to three new care centers to meet the projected long-term care needs of Virginia veterans. The report, titled “Long-Term Care Feasibility Study: Quality Care They Earned,” identifies the need for as many as 600 additional long-term care beds for veterans.

The study, which began in March, examined current and future long-term care needs of veterans and makes recommendations for new facilities and services. The findings support placing veterans care centers in Northern Virginia, the Danville City area, and either Southwest Virginia, Southside Virginia, or the Eastern Shore. These locations would be near the largest veteran population centers currently without a veterans care center. Virginia has two existing centers in Roanoke and Richmond. A third is in the planning stages for Hampton. An expansion of the Richmond center is also in the planning stages.

In addition to the specific recommendations regarding future facilities, the study recommends that the state begin to develop a continuum of long-term care. With approximately 728,000 veterans, Virginia’s veterans population is the 11th largest in the nation.

“Virginia lacks a continuum of long-term care in which a veteran’s condition is matched to seven basic categories of services: extended inpatient care (nursing home, special unit and assisted living), acute inpatient care, ambulatory care, home care, outreach, wellness and housing,” said the study’s lead-author, Louis Rossiter, former Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources. “The creation of such a system will take a long time, but it would avoid duplication of services and use of inappropriate services.”

“It’s critical that we take the long-view on providing care for our veterans,” stated John Marshall, Virginia’s Secretary of Public Safety. “Bringing additional care facilities for veterans on line takes years; and indeed, rethinking the way that we provide care for our veterans will also

take years. We must begin this process now so that we will be prepared as the need for veterans long-term care increases.”

Construction of new veterans care centers, as well as additions or improvements to existing centers, are financed through a federal/state partnership, with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) paying up to 65 percent of construction costs. The USDVA also provides per diem payments to offset the costs of caring for veterans in state veterans care centers. According to a USDVA formula, the Commonwealth of Virginia may apply for federal assistance for the construction and operation of facilities with up to 1,312 beds. With 400 beds already constructed – 240 in Roanoke and 160 in Richmond – and another 200-300 beds planned for Hampton Roads and the future expansion of the Richmond care center, Virginia may apply for federal grant funding for care centers with an additional 600+ beds.

The planning districts with the largest number of veterans 65 years or older include Hampton Roads (47,681), Northern Virginia (41,654), Richmond Regional (27,146), Fifth (12,058), and West Piedmont (10,202). “These five planning districts account for more than 60 percent of all veterans in the state aged 65 and older,” said DVS Commissioner Vince Burgess. “With the Richmond facility just opened and plans underway for a new facility in Hampton, we are planning for the next phase. This study has already helped us start a discussion with veterans about the future of services in the Commonwealth.”

The USDVA estimated that there were 728,755 veterans in Virginia on September 30, 2007, of whom 229,314 were aged 65 and older. The USDVA forecasts that the overall veterans population will drop to 500,199 by 2033, of whom 216,571 will be aged 65 and older. “This points to the continued need for long-term care for our veterans,” Burgess added. “In absolute numbers, veterans aged 65 and older will hold roughly steady over the next 25 years, but as a percentage of the overall population, they’ll grow from 31 percent of Virginia’s veterans today to over 43 percent by 2033.”

To read the full report, go to www.wm.edu/publicpolicy/schroederhome.php. For additional information on the study’s findings contact Louis Rossiter, director of the Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy at the College of William and Mary, (757) 221-1913 or lfross@wm.edu.